

Union-
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Albia, IA
Circ. 2663
From Page:
1
9/29/2005
43418



Historic Hills Corridor working to be named an 'Iowa Great Place'

By BILL HOWES
Chariton Newspapers

On Monday, Sept. 19, a detailed presentation on the Historic Hills Corridor was given to the Iowa Great Places Citizens Advisory Committee at Vision II Theater in Chariton. The presentation was given in an attempt to get Historic Hills selected as an Iowa Great Place.

Approximately 40 people attended the presentation, which was made possible through the cooperation of Vision II Manager, William Laverty, and the Chariton Arts and Recreation Board. Both provided the use of the theater for the presentation.

The presentation was divided into 11 segments, seven of which focused on dimensions formulated by the Iowa Great Places Selection Committee. The seven dimensions were: unique sense of place, engaging experiences, rich social fabric, vital economy, pleasing environment, strong foundation and creative culture.

Representatives from the different counties in Historic Hills were present to speak about each dimension and give a slide presentation with each. The representatives were

IOWA GREAT PLACES

Continued on Page 5



Union-
Republican
Albia, IA
Circ. 2663
From Page:
5
9/29/2005
43418



IOWA GREAT PLACES

Continued from Page 1

given one hour to explain why the Historic Hills Corridor was an Iowa Great Place.

Several representatives from Chariton Valley Planning and Development, which coordinates the Historic Hills Corridor project, were present. They were Executive Director, Tracy Daugherty Miller, Project Coordinator, John McCurdy, and Marketing Director, Kathleen Chester.

The Historic Hills Corridor is a vast region that's made up of nine counties in southern Iowa. The counties which are in it include: Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Wayne, Monroe, Appanoose, Davis, Van Buren and Wapello.

Initially, 149 applications from all over Iowa were sent in to the Great Places Selection Committee for places trying to be named an Iowa Great Place. The applications were narrowed down to 50 places, of which Historic Hills was one, and of these, ultimately three will be chosen as an Iowa Great Place.

The three Iowa Great Places will be announced at a convention at Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City Tuesday, Oct. 11. The three places selected will in turn receive assistance from all 18 state agencies and the Iowa Lottery will also make a scratch ticket signifying each

place selected as an Iowa Great Place.

Denice Gradeless of the Albia Chamber of Commerce spoke about engaging experiences in Historic Hills. She said that many fun events and festivals are held throughout the Corridor including Pancake Days in Centerville, Pioneer Days, Old Settlers celebration in Corydon, Restoration Days, Cruizin' Albia and the All-Iowa Corvette Weekend in Chariton.

There are also various types of racing which can be enjoyed throughout Historic Hills. In addition, there are cemetery, barn and garden tours held along with rodeos and fishing tournaments.

Lifelong learning is also very prevalent with Graceland University in Lamoni and Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa and Centerville.

Many active Arts Councils provide an opportunity to learn how to quilt, dance and paint. For those with a thirst for nostalgia, there are over 180 antique shops found throughout Historic Hills.

McCurdy gave an overview of the Historic Hills Corridor. "Historic Hills is a unique and distinct region both geographically and culturally in southern Iowa."